



# Statements and Speeches

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## AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

An Address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Flora MacDonald, to the Thirty-fourth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 25, 1979

Although I am a newcomer to this Assembly, I have been one of its close observers for many years. I have always been an unwavering supporter of the United Nations, of the ideals expressed in its Charter, and of the constructive role it has played in the development of the international community. There are many successes of which all of us, as members of the United Nations, may be justly proud. The timely intervention of United Nations peacekeeping forces has so often brought quiet to a troubled area. Through resolutions and the great conferences of the 1970s we have identified crucial problems and devised plans of concerted action for solving them. As a specific example, the complex, painstaking negotiations on the law of the sea now have reached a point where, with one last effort of mutual will, we shall have an agreement of extraordinary significance to us all. Yes, the history of the United Nations has proved how useful, indeed how essential, it can be in the world's affairs.

In the recent past, however, I have become increasingly concerned by the path this body has taken. I see it as my responsibility — speaking for Canada as I now do for the first time in this chamber — to tell you frankly what it is that troubles Canadians about recent developments in the conduct of international relations.

The United Nations today is in serious jeopardy of becoming irrelevant to the peoples of the world. Somehow, in dealing with the many difficult issues that have come before this forum over the years, we have lost sight of the very purpose of this organization. We have lost our grasp of the human needs that the United Nations was established to help fill, and of the human rights that it is meant to protect.

Too often the purpose and content of debate is devoted to the interests and aspirations of governments and politicians, not of the peoples they represent. Too often the energies and skills of delegations are devoted to the goal of political advantage, not of human betterment.

As politicians, we know how important it is to choose carefully the means and even the very words we use to promote the goals that we want to promote. But we also know that in doing so we must never lose sight of the genuine best interests of our people. The minute we lose sight of this we are no longer doing our job.

It is in this light that I look at what has been happening recently in this and certain other international organizations. I look, and I become very worried. The preamble to the Charter of the United Nations begins, as I am sure you remember, "We the people of the United Nations...". This is an organization of people, not of govern-

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